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RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO IMMEDIATE 0097
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA IMMEDIATE 0107
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD IMMEDIATE 0576
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL IMMEDIATE 0396
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU IMMEDIATE 0104
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI IMMEDIATE 0263
RHMFISS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL IMMEDIATE
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEOBBA/USCENTAF SHAW AFB NC IMMEDIATE
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RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE IMMEDIATE 2400
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE 1784
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 BISHKEK 000262

SIPDIS

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DEPT FOR SCA/CEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/14/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KG](#)

SUBJECT: KYRGYZ FOREIGN MINISTER URGENTLY REQUESTS DELAY IN
AIRMAN'S DEPARTURE

REF: BISHKEK 259

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Classified By: Amb. Marie L. Yovanovitch, Reason 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: In a March 14 meeting with the Ambassador, Kyrgyz Foreign Minister Karabayev urgently requested that the U.S. delay the departure from Kyrgyzstan of the service member involved in the December 2006 shooting incident at the Manas Airbase. Karabayev presented a diplomatic note (unofficial translation below at paragraph 11) that said the "full scope" of the investigation requiring the service member's presence in the country was not complete, and that the Kyrgyz would make an "international investigation request" for additional actions. Karabayev said that the issue was extremely sensitive, and how it is resolved would affect U.S.-Kyrgyz relations. Karabayev did not present a mechanism for moving forward, but we believe he is prepared to be helpful in brokering an agreement regarding the service member's departure. If there is a way to buy time, we recommend doing so. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) In a March 14 meeting with the Ambassador, Kyrgyz Foreign Minister Ednan Karabayev reacted negatively to the proposed joint statement on the December 2006 shooting incident at the Manas Coalition Airbase. The Commander of USCENTAF had proposed a joint statement that included the announcement that the service member involved in the incident would be redeploying with his unit back to the U.S. In an emotional response, Karabayev stated that returning the

service member before final completion of the investigation would provoke a strong negative reaction from the Kyrgyz public which would resonate throughout the government.

13. (C) Karabayev then delivered a diplomatic note (unofficial translation at paragraph 11) which stated that the service member should not be returned until completion of the case. The diplomatic note said that the Kyrgyz side previously had requested that the American side allow the service member's participation in additional interrogations and in a reenactment of the incident, and that the American side provide the Kyrgyz side with the weapon for ballistic testing. The note urged that the service member remain in Kyrgyzstan until the "full course of investigation is completed." The note further said that the Kyrgyz side intends to send an "international investigation request for additional investigative actions by a representative of the competent U.S. authorities, with participation of the service member, and in the presence of investigation bodies of the Kyrgyz Republic." (COMMENT: Karabayev could not explain exactly what was meant by this section; the Ministry has promised to provide clarification tonight or tomorrow. END COMMENT.)

14. (C) The Ambassador responded by outlining the three outstanding issues that the Kyrgyz had raised in previous meetings: interrogation of the service member by Kyrgyz investigators; participation by the service member in a reenactment of the incident; and handing over the weapon involved in the incident to the Kyrgyz for testing. Regarding the first two issues, the Ambassador told Karabayev that the service member had exercised his constitutional right and had refused further cooperation in the investigation. Regarding the weapon, the Ambassador informed

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the Foreign Minister that the weapon had undergone ballistic testing in the United States and was in the process of being returned to Kyrgyzstan in order to be handed over to the Kyrgyz investigators. The Minister said that he was not aware of this. The Ambassador told Karabayev that the U.S. government had not prevented interrogation by Kyrgyz investigators, and noted that the service member had answered forty)four written questions posed by Kyrgyz investigators prior to exercising his constitutional rights.

15. (C) Karabayev said that news of the (\$1000) interim compensation payment made to the widow had been negatively received by the Kyrgyz public. He said that any payment made should have been a final (larger) payment, as the public perceived this as the only payment. The Ambassador explained that the payment was made in order to alleviate the immediate financial burden on the widow, and that no final settlement could be made until the investigation was completed and final claims adjudicated. The Minister responded that we had not fully appreciated the cultural differences and how the payment would have been received by the Kyrgyz public.

16. (C) The Minister went on to emphasize how sensitive the issue was and stated that the issue was being looked upon at the highest levels of the Kyrgyz government. He noted that how the government handled this situation would resonate throughout the country. He also noted that how the issue was resolved would have an impact on U.S.)Kyrgyz relations. In this regard, he reiterated the importance of keeping the service member in country until the investigation was completed. The Ambassador then noted to the Minister that we had been led to believe that the investigation had been completed on March 8. The Minister said that, as far as he knew, the case was still open, noting that the weapon had not been turned over to the Kyrgyz.

17. (C) The Ambassador then explained to the Minister that all issues of the investigation relating to the need to keep the service member in country had been completed as the service member's refusal to cooperate further in the investigation

negated the rationale for his remaining. Regarding the ballistic testing, the ambassador noted that could be done without the presence of the service member.

18. (C) The Minister then stated that the service member should remain in the country until all aspects of the case had been completed. He noted that he understood that it might be painful for the service member, but that it was also painful for the deceased family as well as the country. He emphasized keeping the service member in country until completion of the investigation was important for maintaining the good relationship between the two countries.

19. (C) The Ambassador then told the Minister that if she forwarded such a request, decision makers would ask how long the service member would remain in the country and how would the GOKG effect a change in public opinion? The Minister responded that the service member should stay until the investigation is completed and the two sides had a chance to review the case. He went on at length saying it was pre-mature even to discuss issuing a joint statement until such time as the whole investigation was completed.

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110. (C) It was then pointed out to the Minister that it was the Kyrgyz authorities who had stated in a February 16 meeting that the investigation was by law required to be completed by March 8. At that meeting, the only three issues that had been raised were the three previously mentioned. Moreover, on March 9, Kyrgyz investigators had been dispatched to the base to confirm the status of the three issues, ostensibly so that they could return and report to the Minister of Interior Affairs that the presence of the service member was no longer needed. The Minister responded that although the scenario was logical, this was an emotional and highly political issue and that the feelings of the Kyrgyz public had to be considered.

111. (SBU) Following is Embassy's unofficial translation of Kyrgyz diplomatic note No. 011-11/430, dated March 14, 2007:

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic presents its compliments to the Embassy of the United States of America and has the honor to convey the following.

The Ministry received a draft joint statement regarding practical completion of the joint investigation into the tragic incident that occurred at the Manas airbase on December 6, 2006

In this regard, the Ministry specifically draws the Embassy's attention of to the following circumstances:

In accordance with opinion of the competent authorities of the Kyrgyz Republic, the full scope of necessary investigative actions into the incident that require the participation of Z. Hatfield have not been completed.

Additionally, the Kyrgyz side intends to send an international investigation request for additional investigative actions by a representative of the competent U.S. authorities, with the participation of Z. Hatfield, and in the presence of a representative of investigative bodies of the Kyrgyz Republic.

Earlier, several times the Kyrgyz side had urged (the American side) to allow participation of Kyrgyz investigators in conducting joint interrogations and a re-enactment, and to provide Kyrgyz law enforcement authorities with the gun that was used in the killing of Kyrgyz citizen A. Ivanov for conducting a ballistic test.

The Kyrgyz side has not yet received from the American side the results of the investigation by the U.S. competent authorities into this tragic incident.

Pursuant an initiative on cooperation that was announced earlier and also for the purpose of a comprehensive and complete investigation, the Kyrgyz side urges the Embassy not to take Z. Hatfield out of Kyrgyzstan until the full course of investigation is completed.

The Ministry avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Embassy the assurances of its highest consideration.

COMMENT

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¶12. (C) Every senior policy maker in Kyrgyzstan recommends that we delay departure of the service member. When asked directly, the Foreign Minister could not articulate a timeline or mechanism for the way forward, but we believe he is prepared to be helpful in brokering an agreement regarding the service member's departure. The Foreign Minister will need some time to do so, and there is no guarantee of success. However, if there is a way to buy that time, we recommend doing so.

YOVANOVITCH